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ABSTRACT

A study examined factors that influenced students who were currently enrolled in a vocational training program to enroll and to continue to stay enrolled in the program. To gather data for the study, researchers administered a project-developed questionnaire to 389 of the 14,254 students enrolled in postsecondary vocational programs throughout Florida. Based on the 318 survey instruments that were returned, it appeared that the strongest influence on students' decision to enter vocational training was the need for the training offered by the school to get the job they wanted. Students' desire to qualify for a specific type of job or their personal goal to provide a better standard of living for themselves or their families were stronger motivational factors upon their initial enrollment than the reputation of the school, reputation of the program, instructor's performance in the classroom, placement record of the program, schedule flexibility, financial aid available, or any other major factor considered. Data also indicated that the students continued their enrollment in vocational training programs for the same reasons they entered. (Appendixes to this report include survey-related correspondence, the survey instrument, and edited and summarized responses to the open-ended survey questions.) (MN)

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FINAL REPORT

Project Number 4-2C31

From July 1, 1983 to August 31, 1984

Identification of Recruitment Barriers to Vocational Training Programs as Perceived by Students, Teachers, Counselors, and Adminstrators in Selected Florida Schools

Phase III

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The project reported herein was conducted pursuant to a grant from the Division of Vocational Education, Florida Department of Education. Contractors undertaking such projects are encouraged to express freely their professional judgments in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent the official position or policy of the Florida Department of Education.

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ABSTRACT

Abstract of the Final Report

Title of the Project:	Identification of Recruitment Barriers to Vocational Training Programs as Perceived by Students, Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators in Selected Florida Schools Phase III
Organization:	University of Florida
Project Director:	Jimmy G. Cheek
Expenditures:	$31,000
Duration of Project:	July 1, 1983 - August 31, 1984
Project Number:	4-2C31

PROBLEM

Vocational educators have been concerned in recent years over the number of students leaving school before obtaining adequate skills and training to acquire and maintain employment. Educators have reported that even among the more successful vocational education programs, a number of barriers cause students to not enter vocational programs or to leave programs prior to program completion. Scanlon, Arrington, Cheek, and Beeman (1982) identified 58 successful recruitment practices to attract students into vocational programs and 49 recruitment and retention barriers that were preventing youth from enrolling or completing vocational education programs. Waltz, Arrington, Cheek, and Beeman (1983) identified 45 retention strategies that have been used successfully to help keep students enrolled in vocational training programs until completion, and concluded that since administrators do not always use recruitment practices that are highly successful, closer considerations should be given to the effectiveness of recruitment practices selected for use. They also concluded that innovative recruitment practices used in isolated cases are normally very effective. These findings indicated a need to identify the factors that influenced students who were currently enrolled in a vocational training program to enroll and to continue their enrollment and to ascertain the degree of influence each factor had upon the student's decisions. The findings of previous studies also indicated a need to develop a comprehensive plan for student recruitment and retention.

OBJECTIVE

The central purpose of this study was to identify factors that influenced students who were currently enrolled in a vocational training program to enroll and also the factors that influenced them to continue enrollment. To achieve this purpose, the following specific objective was developed as a guideline for conducting the study: to describe the factors that influenced students to enroll in postsecondary vocational education programs and to identify factors that contributed to their continued enrollment (i.e., the methods they are using to overcome the barriers to retention identified in the first two phases of the study).

PROCEDURES

A census of the 31 designated area vocational education schools in Florida was taken to ascertain the number of postsecondary students enrolled who had completed at least one semester of a vocational training program. The director of each school was asked to indicate whether or not they would cooperate in the study. Of the 31 school directors contacted, 22 indicated they would cooperate and indicated there were 14,254 students enrolled in postsecondary vocational programs who had completed at least one semester of training. The population was limited to students who had completed at least one semester because the researchers were interested in identifying those factors that were contributing to the students continued enrollment. A sample of 389 students was selected.

The instrument used in this study was developed by the researchers. Previous phases of the study identified recruitment and retention barriers and strategies for overcoming the identified barriers. The purpose of this instrument was to ascertain whether each strategy had influenced initial enrollment or continued enrollment. To accomplish this, the 85 strategies which had been identified in Phase II (Waltz et al, 1983) were condensed to 20 statements. The condensation was based upon the success of the strategies as identified in Phase II and by combining strategies which were closely related. Two open-ended questions were also included to allow the students to indicate other major reasons for enrolling or continuing enrollment. The instrument with the cover letter was mailed to cooperating area vocational schools in Florida. The number of surveys sent to each director was proportional to the percentage of the total population the school represented. The directors randomly distributed the surveys among their instructors, who in turn randomly distributed the surveys among several of their students who had completed a semster or more of their program. The instructors were asked to have the students respond to the instruments immediately and to collect the instruments as soon as the students had completed them. Of the 389 survey instruments mailed, 318 were completed and returned for an 82 percent return rate.

RESULTS

1. The strongest influence upon a student's decision to enter vocational training was the need for the training offered by the school to get the job they want.

2. The student's desire to qualify for a specific type of job or their personal goal to provide a better standard of living for themselves or their families were stronger influences upon their initial enrollment than the reputation of the school, reputation of the program, instructor's performance in the classroom, placement record of the program, schedule flexibility, financial aid available, or any other major factor considered.

3. The students continue their enrollment and strive to complete the program for the same reasons they entered.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION	1
PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES	3
PROCEDURE	3
Population and Sample	3
Instrumentation	3
Data Collection	4
Statistical Analysis	4
PRESENTATION OF DATA	5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	15
DISCUSSION	15
Recruitment	15
Retention	16
Summary	17
REFERENCES	18
APPENDICES	
A. Initial Letter to Vocational Directors and Consent to Cooperate Form	19
B. Survey Instrument for Postsecondary School Students	22
C. Cover Letter	25
D. Post-Survey Thank You Letter	27
E. Edited and Summarized Responses to the Open-Ended Questions	29

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Frequency Distribution, Number, Mean Scores, and Rank Order of Each Strategy for Influence Upon Initial Enrollment	6
2	Frequency Distribution, Number, Mean Scores, and Rank Order of Each Strategy for Influence Upon Continued Enrollment	9
3	Correlation Coefficients Between Initial and Continued Enrollment	13

Identification of Recruitment Barriers to Vocational Training Programs as Perceived by Students, Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators in Selected Florida Schools
Phase III

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Vocational educators have been concerned in recent years over the number of students leaving school before obtaining adequate skills and training to acquire and maintain employment. Educators have reported that even among the more successful vocational education programs, a number of barriers cause students to not enter vocational programs or to leave programs prior to program completion. Scanlon, Arrington, Cheek, and Beeman (1982) identified 58 successful recruitment practices to attract students into vocational programs and 49 recruitment and retention barriers that were preventing youth from enrolling or completing vocational education programs. According to Scanlon et al (1982) area vocational school directors ranked "encourage high school students to take courses while completing graduation requirements at their high school" most successful among the recruitment practices used. All of the directors surveyed indicated that they had experienced "very much success" with this recruitment practice. "Advertising programs in local newspapers" was the second highest ranked recruitment practice followed by "personal contacts with prospective students made by past and present students" and "mass mailings of the school class schedule to prospective students." Other successful recruitment practices included in the top ten were: "Utilization of special displays emphasizing the success of students who completed vocational programs", "recruitment through community organizations dealing with special target groups", "advertisements or flyers sent to parents", "development of slide-tape presentations for distribution throughout the region", "participation in recruitment programs conducted by high schools", and "providing tours of vocational programs for prospective students."

A comparison between the recruitment practices that were perceived as successful in relation to the practices that were being utilized revealed that the most utilized recruitment practice was not among the ten most successful practices. Waltz, Arrington, Cheek, and Beeman (1983) concluded that since administrators do not always use recruitment practices that are highly successful, closer considerations should be given to the effectiveness of recruitment practices being used. Waltz, et al (1983) also concluded that there is a large number of innovative recruitment practices being used in specific cases that are particularly successful and normally very effective.

Scanlon et al (1982) also identified student recruitment and retention barriers to vocational programs and grouped the barriers into three previously identified categories; institutional, dispositional, and situational (Cross, 1977). A comparison of the students responses to barriers in each of the three groups revealed that dropouts and returnees (those who dropped out and later returned) viewed the institutional barriers significantly different from the dispositional and situational barriers. It appeared that the students who left programs, left because of some perceived degree of dissatisfaction with the institution, rather than personal inadequacies.

The perceptions of administrators, teachers, and counselors as to the influence of the identified barriers on student recruitment and retention were also identified by Scanlon et al (1982). Program barriers perceived by the total group of respondents as having the greatest impact on program completions were: "the financial need of the student", "the ability and willingness of the student to attend class regularly", and "a lack of self motivation on the part of the student." Other program barriers perceived by the total group of respondents as impacting on program completion were: "the inability of students to accept responsibilities associated with the program", "the student's attitudes that government support is better than working", "uncertainty about their future", and " acceptance of a job related to their vocational training."

Administrators, teachers, and counselors did not respond significantly different to barriers grouped as institutional and dispositional; however, they did respond significantly different to barriers grouped as situational.

Scanlon et al (1982) noted that there was little difference between the major barriers perceived by the faculty groups and the major barriers perceived by the students themselves. Major differences to be noted, however, are that faculty groups as a whole felt that students often failed to complete programs because of a lack of responsible behavior, poor motivation, and poor attitude. Conversely, students did not perceive their behavior or actions as irresponsible, but rather as situations over which they had no control.

Waltz, et al (1983) identified 45 retention strategies that have been used successfully to help keep students enrolled in vocational training programs until completion. The ten most successful strategies for overcoming barriers to student retention in vocational programs as perceived by administrators were: "relate theory to application on the job", "get students into hands-on work quickly", "apply work experience toward program completion requirements", "utilize the active involvement of an advisory committee", "provide a supervised cooperative education experience", "assist students with applying for federal Basic Educational Opportunity Grant funds", "assess job placement and employer satisfaction", "maintain an open entry-open exit policy", "utilize veteran benefits", and "consult with industry personnel."

Correlation coefficients between the perceived degree of success of each retention strategy and the degree of utilization revealed that there was a high degree of relationship between success and utilization of the strategies i.e. when the respondents rated a retention strategy high for utilization, they also rated it high for success. All the correlations were positive indicating that the administrators felt the retention strategies they were using were successful.

Based on the findings of Scanlon et al (1982) and Waltz et al (1983) this study concentrated on identifying factors that influenced students who were currently enrolled in a vocational training program to enroll and also the factors that influenced them to continue enrollment. The opinions of current students provided a third dimension that had not been investigated.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The central purpose of this study was to identify factors that influenced students who were currently enrolled in a vocational training program to enroll and also the factors that influenced them to continue enrollment. To achieve this purpose, the following specific objective was developed as a guideline for conducting the study: describe the factors that influenced students to enroll in postsecondary vocational education programs and the factors that contributed to their continued enrollment (i.e., the methods they are using to overcome the barriers to retention identified in the first two phases of the study).

PROCEDURE

Population and Sample

The population of the study was all the students enrolled in the area vocational schools providing postsecondary training in Florida. A census of the 31 designated area vocational education schools was taken to ascertain the number of postsecondary students enrolled who had completed at least one semester of a vocational training program (Appendix A). The director of each school was asked to indicate whether or not they would cooperate in the study. Of the 31 school directors contacted, 22 (71 percent) indicated they would cooperate and that there were 14,254 students enrolled in postsecondary vocational programs who had completed at least one semester of training. The study was limited to students who had completed at least one semester because the researchers were interested in identifying those factors that were contributing to the students continued enrollment.

Based upon a recommended sample selection table (Yamane, 1967), a sample of 389 students was selected from the accessible population. A precision level of plus or minus 5 percent was used. The sample was stratified based upon the number of students identified in each school. Each of the 22 directors of the area vocational schools received the proper number of surveys and was asked to randomly distribute them to instructors. The instructors randomly distributed the instruments to the study sample.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was developed by the researchers. Previous phases of the study used instruments which identified recruitment and retention barriers and strategies for overcoming the identified barriers. The purpose of the instrument used in Phase III was to ascertain whether each strategy had influenced initial enrollment or continued enrollment. To accomplish this, the 85 strategies which had been identified in Phase II (Waltz et al, 1983) were condensed to 20 statements. The condensation was based upon the success rate of the strategies as identified in Phase II and by combining strategies which were closely related. Two open-ended questions were also included to allow the students to indicate other major reasons for enrolling or continuing enrollment.

Content validity of the instrument was established by requesting 27 students enrolled in postsecondary training programs who had completed at least a semester of their training program to respond to and critique the instrument. Also, faculty members of the postsecondary schools and the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, the University of Florida, reviewed the instrument. No major revisions were recommended. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (Guttman, 1945, Novick and Lewis, 1967) was calculated for each column on the instrument. The Alpha coefficient was .82 for the initial influence column and .80 for the continued influence column.

The instrument (Appendix B) utilized a four-point Likert scale to ascertain the student's perception of the degree of influence each of the strategies had upon their initial enrollment and their continued enrollment. The respondents indicated their perception of the degree of influence of each strategy by circling either: (1) no influence, (2) minor influence, (3) moderate influence, or (4) strong influence. A separate scale was used to allow the students to indicate the strategies' influence upon their initial enrollment and their continued enrollment.

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected from September 22 to October 28, 1983. The instrument with the cover letter (Appendix C) was mailed to cooperating area vocational schools in Florida. The number of surveys sent to each director was proportional to the percentage of the total population the school represented. The directors randomly distributed the surveys among their instructors, who in turn randomly distributed the surveys among several of their students who had completed a semester or more of their program. The instructors were asked to have the students respond to the instruments immediately and to collect the instruments as soon as the students had completed them.

Two weeks following the initial mailing, follow-up telephone calls were made to the directors who had not returned the survey instruments. One week following the first follow-up telephone call a second telephone call was made to the remaining non-responding directors. In response to the second telephone call, every director returned all or a portion of the survey instruments. Of the 389 survey instruments mailed, 318 were returned for an 82 percent return rate. All survey instruments returned were used in the analysis of the data. A post-survey thank you letter was mailed to each director expressing appreciation for their cooperation in conducting the study (Appendix D).

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed by determining the mean response for each of the 20 strategies on the questionnaire. The mean responses were rank-ordered to indicate the factors which had the highest degree of influence upon the students' initial enrollment and also upon their continued enrollment. A frequency distribution was calculated for each factor. Also, correlation coefficients between response for initial influence and continued influence were determined.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The data in Table 1 indicate the reason most students enrolled in postsecondary training was that they needed the training offered by the school to get the job they want. This reason was ranked first among those items listed in the survey with 74.3 percent of the respondents indicating that it was a strong influence and only 9.6 percent indicating it had no influence upon their initial enrollment. Other factors among the top five influencing students to enroll in postsecondary training were: they felt they could provide a better standard of living for themselves and their family if they obtained vocational training, the school had a reputation for quality programs, the instructors kept students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance, and the course they enrolled in had a good record for placing students in the field they were trained. More than 40 percent of the respondents indicated each of the top five factors had a strong influence upon their decision to enroll in vocational training.

Conversely, the data shows there were nine factors which more than 40 percent of the respondents believe had no influence upon their decision to enroll in vocational training. These factors were: child care was convenient and appropriate, the school's night schedule allowed students to attend school and maintain a full-time job, a part-time job was compatible with the school schedule, guidance personnel helped identify interests and aptitudes and encouraged pursuit of vocational training, and the school allowed students to test out of some areas of course work where previous experience had been obtained. Also included were, a friend or former graduate of the program recommended it, the school was close to home, financial aid was available, and transportation was readily available and convenient.

The data in Table 2 shows that students continue their enrollment in postsecondary vocational training because they need the training offered by the school to acquire the job skills necessary for a specific career. More than 75 percent of the respondents indicated this to be a strong influence in their continued enrollment. Nearly 71 percent of the respondents felt they could provide a better standard of living for themselves and their family if they obtained vocational training. This was the second most frequent factor identified, influencing students decisions to continue enrollment. More than 40 percent of the respondents also indicated that five other factors had a strong influence upon their decision to continue enrollment in their chosen vocational training program. These additional five factors were: the instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance, the school had a reputation for quality programs, the course in which they enrolled had a good record for placing students in the field they were trained, and the school had a good reputation for helping its graduates find employment.

Conversely, 88.7 percent of the respondents indicated that child care being convenient and appropriate for their needs had no influence on their continued enrollment in postsecondary vocational training. Also, 82 percent of the respondents indicated the school's night schedule had no influence on their continued enrollment. Other factors which more than 40 percent of the respondents indicated had no influence on their continued enrollment were: a

Table 1

Frequency Distribution, Number, Mean Scores, and Rank Order of Each Strategy for Influence Upon Initial Enrollment

Factors	No Influence 1	Minor Influence 2	Moderate Influence 3	Strong Influence 4	N	Mean	Rank
I needed the training offered by the school to get the job I wanted	28 (9.6%)	20 (6.9%)	27 (9.2%)	217 (74.3%)	292	3.48	1
I felt I could provide a better standard of living for myself & family if I obtained vocational training	26 (8.9%)	19 (6.5%)	50 (17.0%)	198 (67.6%)	293	3.43	2
The school has a reputation for quality programs	34 (11.8%)	30 (10.5%)	74 (25.8%)	149 (51.9%)	287	3.18	3
The instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance	43 (14.6%)	37 (12.5%)	76 (25.8%)	139 (47.1%)	295	3.05	4
The course in which I enrolled had a good record for placing students in the field in which they were trained	63 (21.4%)	36 (12.2%)	72 (24.4%)	124 (42.0%)	295	2.87	5
The school had a good reputation for helping its graduates find employment	67 (22.5%)	44 (14.8%)	76 (25.5%)	111 (37.2%)	298	2.78	6

Table 1 (continued)

Factors	No Influence 1	Minor Influence 2	Moderate Influence 3	Strong Influence 4	N	Mean	Rank
Special help was available at the school to assure student success	87 (29.5%)	58 (19.7%)	77 (26.1%)	73 (24.7%)	295	2.46	7
The class attendance policies suited me	95 (32.5%)	48 (16.4%)	72 (24.7%)	77 (26.4%)	292	2.45	8
Entry into and exit from program was simple	89 (30.6%)	62 (21.3%)	66 (22.7%)	74 (25.4%)	291	2.43	9
Students were allowed to apply work experience toward program completion requirements	109 (37.6%)	36 (12.4%)	66 (22.8%)	79 (27.2%)	290	2.40	10
The school motivated students by providing incentives based on student performance	101 (34.2%)	62 (21.0%)	81 (27.5%)	51 (17.3%)	295	2.28	11
Transportation was readily available and convenient	137 (46.5%)	41 (13.9%)	42 (14.2%)	75 (25.4%)	295	2.19	12
Financial aid was available	158 (53.7%)	27 (9.2%)	45 (15.3%)	64 (21.8%)	294	2.05	13
The school was close to my home	147 (49.3%)	53 (17.8%)	47 (15.8%)	51 (17.1%)	298	2.01	14

Table 1 (continued)

Factors	No Influence 1	Minor Influence 2	Moderate Influence 3	Strong Influence 4	N	Mean	Rank
A friend or former graduate of the program in which I am enro led recommended it to me	164 (57.1%)	23 (8.0%)	39 (13.6%)	61 (21.3%)	287	1.99	15
The school allowed me to test out of some areas of course work where I had previous experience	153 (53.1%)	44 (15.3%)	44 (15.3%)	47 (16.3%)	288	1.95	16
Guidance personnel helped me to identify my interests and aptitudes and encouraged me to pursue vocational training	159 (54.1%)	47 (16.0%)	37 (12.6%)	51 (17.3%)	294	1.93	17
My part-time job was compatible with my school schedule	193 (66.3%)	22 (7.6%)	32 (11.0%)	44 (15.1%)	291	1.75	18
The school's night schedule allowed me to attend school and maintain a full-time job	231 (83.1%)	13 (4.7%)	15 (5.4%)	19 (6.8%)	278	1.36	19
Child care was convenient and appropriate for my needs	244 (87.8%)	13 (4.7%)	4 (1.4%)	17 (6.1%)	278	1.26	20

Table 2

Frequency Distribution, Number, Mean Scores, and Rank Order of Each Strategy for Influence Upon Continued Enrollment

Factors	No Influence 1	Minor Influence 2	Moderate Influence 3	Strong Influence 4	N	Mean	Rank
I needed the training offered by the school to get the job I wanted	28 (9.7%)	15 (5.2%)	28 (9.7%)	218 (75.4%)	289	3.51	1
I felt I could provide a better standard of living for myself & family if I obtained vocational training	22 (7.7%)	18 (6.3%)	43 (15.1%)	202 (70.9%)	285	3.49	2
The instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance	20 (7.0%)	22 (7.7%)	89 (31.0%)	156 (54.3%)	287	3.33	3
The school has a reputation for quality programs	28 (9.9%)	27 (9.5%)	66 (23.3%)	162 (57.3%)	283	3.28	4
The course in which I enrolled had a good record for placing students in the field in which they were trained	41 (14.5%)	31 (11.0%)	78 (27.5%)	133 (47.0%)	283	3.07	5
The school had a good reputation for helping its graduates find employment	50 (17.4%)	47 (16.4%)	74 (25.8%)	116 (40.4%)	287	2.89	6

Table 2 (continued)

Factors	No Influence 1	Minor Influence 2	Moderate Influence 3	Strong Influence 4	N	Mean	Rank
Students were allowed to apply work experience toward program completion requirements	86 (30.5%)	34 (12.1%)	58 (20.6%)	104 (36.8%)	282	2.64	7
Special help was available at the school to assure student success	72 (25.2%)	48 (16.8%)	86 (30.1%)	80 (27.9%)	286	2.61	8
The school motivated students by providing incentives based on student performance	81 (28.8%)	49 (17.4%)	78 (27.8%)	73 (26.0%)	281	2.51	9
The class attendance policies suited me	88 (31.1%)	50 (17.7%)	66 (23.3%)	79 (27.9%)	283	2.48	10
Entry into and exit from program was simple	86 (30.7%)	58 (20.7%)	66 (23.6%)	70 (25.0%)	280	2.43	11
Transportation was readily available and convenient	128 (44.6%)	39 (13.6%)	53 (18.5%)	67 (23.3%)	287	2.21	12
The school allowed me to test out of some areas of course work where I had previous experience	132 (47.6%)	47 (17.0%)	52 (18.8%)	46 (16.6%)	277	2.04	13
The school was close to my home	143 (50.0%)	44 (15.4%)	51 (17.8%)	48 (16.8%)	286	2.01	14

Table 2 (continued)

Factors	No Influence 1	Minor Influence 2	Moderate Influence 3	Strong Influence 4	N	Mean	Rank
Financial aid was available	157 (54.9%)	32 (11.2%)	40 (14.0%)	57 (19.9%)	286	1.99	15
Guidance personnel helped me to identify my interests and aptitudes and encouraged me to pursue vocational training	162 (56.6%)	32 (11.2%)	49 (17.1%)	43 (15.1%)	286	1.91	16
A friend or former graduate of the program in which I am enrolled recommended it to me	173 (62.7%)	24 (8.7%)	25 (9.1%)	54 (19.5%)	276	1.86	17
My part-time job was compatible with my school schedule	171 (61.1%)	25 (8.9%)	41 (14.6%)	43 (15.4%)	280	1.84	18
The school's night schedule allowed me to attend school and maintain a full-time job	223 (82.0%)	13 (4.8%)	12 (4.4%)	24 (8.8%)	272	1.40	19
Child care was convenient and appropriate for my needs	242 (88.7%)	8 (2.9%)	3 (1.1%)	20 (7.3%)	273	1.27	20

part-time job was compatible with the school schedule, a friend or former graduate of the program had recommended it, guidance personnel helped identify interest and aptitudes and encouraged pursuit of vocational training, financial aid was available, the school was close to their home, the school allowed them to test out of some areas of course work where previous experience had been gained, and transportation was readily available and convenient.

According to the frequency distribution, means, and rank order of the means shown in Tables 1 and 2, the same factors that were a strong influence upon the students' initial enrollment were also a strong influence upon their continued enrollment. The data in the tables also show that the same is true for the factors that had no influence upon the students' continued enrollment.

The correlation coefficients between responses to the factors related to initial enrollment and continued enrollment presented in Table 3 are all positive and significant at the .05 alpha level. The correlation coefficients range from .94 for "child care was convenient and appropriate" to .64 for "the instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance." It should be noted that all the correlation coefficients are consistently high, indicating the students feel that the factors influencing them to enroll initially also influence them to continue their enrollment. Conversely, it also indicates the students feel the factors that do not influence their initial enrollment also do not influence their continued enrollment. For example, "child care was convenient and appropriate" was ranked lowest on initial enrollment and also lowest on continued enrollment; therefore, the correlation coefficient was very high at .94.

In addition to evaluating the degree of influence each identified strategy had upon initial and continued enrollment, the students were asked to respond to open-ended statements requesting them to state other reasons for enrolling and continuing enrollment in a vocational training program (Appendix E). Of the students responding to the open-ended questions, almost all of them ranked their reasons as having a strong influence upon their decision to enroll or continue enrollment. There was no one common reason given for enrolling by a significant number of the respondents and most of the reasons were personal. Some of the more non-traditional reasons given for enrolling were: retired and needed something constructive to do, needed a challenge for therapy because of the loss of a spouse, needed to do something for myself, wanted to learn computers, had been a homemaker for too long and wanted to change my way of life, a son attended the school, I was injured and needed to learn a new trade, I wanted to go in business for myself, I felt college degrees were not necessary for good jobs today, and the training hours in program agreed with child's school hours.

There was also a great variety of reasons given for continuing their enrollment as was indicated by the responses to why they continued their enrollment. Some of the reasons were: I get paid to go, I'm not good enough to work in the field yet, I love school now and love what I am learning, I have come too far to stop now, and I am optimistic about the job opportunities. Also, listed were: to finish a goal I started, the teachers are great, the feeling of accomplishment, the diploma is impressive in getting a job, the program is what I want, the course is extremely interesting, the course offers a challenge, and there is a shortage of experienced personnel in this career in my country.

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients Between Initial and Continued Enrollment

Item	Correlation Coefficient
1. Financial aid was available	.84
2. My part-time job was compatible with my school schedule	.79
3. The school was close to my home	.90
4. Transportation was readily available and convenient	.91
5. Guidance personnel helped me identify my interests and aptitudes & encouraged me to pursue vocational training	.89
6. The class attendance policies suited me	.88
7. The school had a good reputation for helping its graduates find employment	.79
8. The course in which I enrolled had a good reputation for placing students in the field in which they were trained	.79
9. Special help was available at school to assure student success	.80
10. The school motivated students by providing incentives based on student performance	.79
11. The instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance	.64
12. Students were allowed to apply work experience toward program completion requirements	.76
13. Entry into and exit from program was simple	.84

Table 3 (continued)

Item	Correlation Coefficient
14. The school's night schedule allowed me to attend school and maintain a full-time job	.79
15. I needed the training offered by the school to get the job I wanted	.85
16. The school allowed me to test out of some areas	.92
17. Child care was convenient and appropriate for my needs	.94
18. I felt I could provide a better standard of living for myself & family if I obtained vocational training	.87
19. A friend or former graduate of the program in which I am enrolled recommended it to me	.89
20. The school has a reputation for quality programs	.76

In general, the reasons given for enrolling and continuing enrollment are as varied as the population vocational training programs serve. Appendix E is an edited list of all the reasons given to the open-ended questions.

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations were made based upon an analysis of the data compiled in this study.

1. The strongest influence upon a student's decision to enter vocational training is the need for the training offered by the school to get the job they want; therefore, recruitment efforts should emphasize the potential end result of successfully completing a program of study.

2. The students' desire to qualify for a specific type of job or their personal goal to provide a better standard of living for themselves or their families are stronger influences upon their initial enrollment than the reputation of the school, reputation of the program, instructor's performance in the classroom, placement record of the program, schedule flexibility, financial aid available or any other major factor considered; therefore, a major emphasis of a recruitment effort should include the personal benefits gained from obtaining vocational training.

3. The students continue their enrollment and strive to complete the program for the same reasons they entered; therefore, retention strategies should emphasize the importance of completing a program to meet the requirements of the job they seek.

4. The results of the study should be made available to area vocational school directors and staff members responsible for student recruitment and retention at the postsecondary level.

5. Further study should be conducted to assess the impact of the implementation of the Florida Postsecondary Vocational Educational Recruitment and Retention plan and to assess administrators attitudes toward the recruitment and retention plan.

DISCUSSION

Recruitment

The central purpose of the initial study at its inception was to describe barriers to recruitment and retention of disadvantaged, unemployed, under-employed, and out-of-school youth as perceived by students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. In pursuit of this central purpose it was revealed that several of the recruitment practices used extensively by vocational administrators were not the ones which they rated most successful. For example, "utilization of display booths at state fairs, exhibitions, malls, etc." was ranked as the most utilized recruitment practice conducted by vocational school administrators; however, the success rate of this same strategy ranked fourteenth among all recruitment strategies considered. Two other recruitment practices that ranked high with regard to utilization and low on successfulness were: "development of a slide tape presentation for distribution" and "visits to feeder schools by vocational school staff and students."

Also, the way vocational school administrators perceive the success of particular strategies was different from the way students perceive the same strategy's effectiveness. For example, the recruitment practice which received the overall highest ranking in terms of frequency of use and perceived success by administrators was, "personal contacts with prospective students made by past and present students." However, students who had completed a semester or more of their training indicated that a friend or former graduate of a program had only minor influence upon their decision to enroll and this factor ranked fifteenth out of twenty factors considered. Also, 57.1 percent of the students indicated that this factor had no influence upon their decision to enroll in postsecondary vocational training. Additionally, administrators indicated that encouraging high school students to take courses while completing graduation requirements at their high school was the most successful recruitment practice being used. Students, responding to a somewhat different aspect of early contact, indicated that advanced credit for previous training or experience had relatively little influence upon their decision to enroll. These items ranked tenth and sixteenth out of the twenty items considered. More than 50 percent of the students indicated that being allowed to test out of some areas of course work had no influence upon their decisions to enroll in postsecondary training. It is interesting to note that students who completed one semester or more of a program indicated that the need for training to get the job they wanted and that they could improve their standard of living if they obtained vocational training were the most influential factors motivating them to enroll.

After analyzing the results of phases I and III of the study, several points need to be emphasized. First, there is noticeably more agreement between administrators and students as to what influences them to enroll than there is disagreements. In addition, the factors in which there is disagreement, the disagreement is meaningful. Administrators need to be cautious not to misinterpret or over-emphasize recruitment strategies that have limited utility, namely, "personal contacts made by past and present students." This strategy is important in making initial contacts, but once the contact is made, the real recruitment effort should be to emphasize what vocational training can mean to the potential students' standard of living and that vocational training can help the potential students attain the kind of employment desired. Finally, the students did not indicate that advanced credit for previous training or experience had a major influence upon their enrollment; therefore, administrators should not rely too heavily on this strategy.

Retention

Retaining students in a vocational training program after a successful recruitment effort can be accomplished by skillfully developing a comprehensive plan for retention. As a result of phases I and II of this study, a number of factors have been identified which are important in developing such a plan. For example, every student has individual and unique problems for which there is no common solution; therefore, it is important that a retention plan concentrate on barriers that affect major groups of students. Barriers such as: need for financial aid, need for guidance assistance, need for transportation, and need for part-time employment affect a significant portion of a student population and are barriers over which administrators using a comprehensive plan may exert significant influence.

Secondly, the barriers preventing students from completing vocational training can be divided into three categories; institutional, dispositional, and situational. Of these three categories, institutional barriers are the ones over which vocational administrators have the greatest influence. For example, Phase II identified 18 strategies to assist students in overcoming the two institutional barriers; need more guidance and courses are not of suitable quality. Administrators could implement any of these strategies with very little additional cost to the operation of an institution.

A third point that should be considered is that of the top ten barriers identified by the students, only two were classified as institutional. Administrators; however, have identified numerous positive strategies to assist students in overcoming situational and dispositional barriers. For example, regular class attendance was identified as a major situational barrier; however, six strategies were identified to help overcome the concerns created by irregular class attendance.

Another factor that needs noting is that of the ten barriers having the greatest impact on the students' decisions to drop out of school, only one was considered beyond the realm of help where school administrators could impact. That barrier was "health problems" other than those resulting from a handicapping condition.

Finally, when planning retention strategies continued emphasis should be placed on such factors as: the importance of completing the program to qualify for a desired job, the improved standard of living that can be experienced as a result of completing a training program, the relationship between classroom theory to the real job situations, and the placement reputation of program completers. Students who had completed a semester or more of their training indicated that these factors were important to their continued enrollment in vocational training.

Summary

Recruitment and retention is a concern with which all vocational school administrators must deal. The results of this extensive study on recruitment and retention reveals to some extent the problems and the solutions. Organizing one's efforts is the key to accomplishing an identified goal; therefore, referral to the manual for student retention and the plan for student recruitment resulting from this study should prove beneficial to the administrator responsible for this phase of an institution's operation.

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Appendix A

Initial Letter to Vocational Directors
and
Consent to Cooperate Form

REFERENCES

Cross, P. A Critical Review of State and National Studies of the Needs and Interest of Adult Learners. US Educational Resources Information Center, 1977, (ERIC Document Number ED 196 384).

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Appendix A

Initial Letter to Vocational Directors
and
Consent to Cooperate Form

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA 32611

PARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL
AND EXTENSION EDUCATION

305 ROLFS HALL

PHONE: 904/392-0502

Appendix A

August 15, 1983

Dear

The Agricultural and Extension Education Department of the University of Florida in cooperation with the Florida State Department of Education, Division of Vocational Education will be conducting a survey of postsecondary students during the 1983 Fall semester. We will need your cooperation and help from some of your instructors in distributing and collecting the survey instrument.

You can help us now by indicating that you will cooperate with the study and giving us an approximate number of postsecondary students enrolled who have completed at least a semester of work in a specialized training program.

The survey to which the students will be asked to respond will be designed to assess the students' reasons for enrolling in vocational training and their satisfaction with the program since enrolling. The information gained from this survey will provide the data for the final phase of a three-phase study on Recruitment and Retention Barriers to Vocational Training Programs in Florida Schools.

Please complete and return the enclosed attachment. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Freddie Waltz

Freddie Waltz
Assistant Professor

FW/cf
Enclosure

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
SCHOOL OF FOREST RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION CENTER FOR TROPICAL AGRICULTURE

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, or national origin

_____ Yes, we will cooperate and give assistance in conducting a postsecondary student survey.

_____* Sorry, we cannot participate in your study this school term.

We will have approximately _____ postsecondary students enrolled during
Number
the Fall semester who have completed at least one semester of postsecondary vocational training.

_____
School Name

_____
Administrative Official

* Before deciding not to participate please call me, Freddie Waltz, at (904) 392-0502 for further explanation of the study.

Appendix B

The Survey Instrument for Postsecondary School Students

APPENDIX B

A Survey of Selected Florida Area Postsecondary Vocational School Students

Directions: To what degree has each of the following factors influenced your decision to enroll or to continue your enrollment in a postsecondary vocational training program? Consider each factor as to its influence upon your initial enrollment and its influence upon your continued enrollment. Circle the number that most nearly represents the degree of influence each factor had on your decision. Please respond to all the factors and write in any additional factors that influenced your decision on the lines provided at the end of the survey.

FACTORS	Initial Enrollment				Continued Enrollment			
	NO INFLUENCE	MINOR INFLUENCE	MODERATE INFLUENCE	STRONG INFLUENCE	NO INFLUENCE	MINOR INFLUENCE	MODERATE INFLUENCE	STRONG INFLUENCE
Example: My spouse pressured me to attend school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. Financial aid was available.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. My part-time job was compatible with my school schedule.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. The school was close to my home.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Transportation was readily available and convenient.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Guidance personnel helped me identify my interests and aptitudes and encouraged me to pursue vocational training.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
6. The class attendance policies suited me.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
7. The school had a good reputation for helping its graduates find employment.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
8. The course in which I enrolled had a good record for placing students in the field in which they were trained.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
9. Special help was available at the school to assure student success.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
10. The school motivated students by providing incentives based on student performance.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
11. The instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

FACTORS	Initial Enrollment				Continued Enrollment			
	NO INFLUENCE	MINOR INFLUENCE	MODERATE INFLUENCE	STRONG INFLUENCE	NO INFLUENCE	MINOR INFLUENCE	MODERATE INFLUENCE	STRONG INFLUENCE
12. Students were allowed to apply work experience toward program completion requirements.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
13. Entry into and exit from program was simple.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
14. The school's night schedule allowed me to attend school and maintain a full-time job.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
15. I needed the training offered by the school to get the job I wanted.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
16. The school allowed me to test out of some areas of course work where I had previous experience.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
17. Child care was convenient and appropriate for my needs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
18. I felt I could provide a better standard of living for myself and family if I obtained vocational training.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
19. A friend or former graduate of the program in which I am enrolled recommended it to me.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
20. The school has reputation for quality programs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
21. Other major reasons for enrolling in vocational training at the school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
_____								
_____								
22. Other major reasons for continuing in program.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
_____								
_____								

23. In what program area are you enrolled?

_____

Appendix C

Cover Letter

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA 32611

PARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL
AND EXTENSION EDUCATION

305 ROLFS HALL

PHONE: 904/392-0502

Appendix C

September 21, 1983

Dear

The Agricultural and Extension Education Department of the University of Florida in cooperation with the Florida State Department of Education, Division of Vocational Education are conducting a survey of postsecondary vocational students. We need your cooperation and help from some of your instructors in distributing and collecting the survey instrument.

As per our previous communications in regards to the study, I am enclosing _____ copies of "A Survey of Selected Florida Area Postsecondary Vocational School Students". I would appreciate you distributing them among several of your instructors representing different program areas. Please ask the instructors to randomly select students who have completed a semester or a major portion of their program to respond to the survey. If possible, have students complete the survey and return it to the instructors immediately. Collect the completed surveys and return them to me by September 30, 1983 in the enclosed envelope.

The survey to which the students are being asked to respond is designed to assess the students' reasons for enrolling in vocational training and their satisfaction with the program since enrolling. The information gained from this survey will provide data for the final phase of a three-phase study on Recruitment and Retention Barriers to Vocational Training Programs in Florida Schools.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Freddie Waltz

Freddie Waltz
Assistant Professor

FW/cf
Enclosure

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
SCHOOL OF FOREST RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION CENTER FOR TROPICAL AGRICULTURE

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, or national origin.

Appendix D

Post-Survey Thank You Letter

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA 32611

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND EXTENSION EDUCATION

305 ROLFS HALL

PHONE: 904/392-0502

Appendix D

October 25, 1983

Dear

Thank you very much for the prompt return of the completed survey instruments related to postsecondary student recruitment and retention. I am sure it was added work to your already busy schedule, however, such contributions on the part of dedicated educational professionals is what makes meaningful research possible. I appreciate it and if we, the Agricultural and Extension Education staff at the University of Florida, can assist you in any way please call on us.

Sincerely yours,

Freddie Waltz

Freddie Waltz
Assistant Professor

FW/cf

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

SCHOOL OF FOREST RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION CENTER FOR TROPICAL AGRICULTURE

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Appendix E

Edited and Summarized Responses to the Open-Ended Questions

Appendix E

Edited and Summarized Responses to the Open-Ended Questions

Question 21: Other major reasons for enrolling in vocational training.

1. I wanted to find a good career.
2. I needed training and needed to earn money at the same time.
3. I wanted a court reporter training program offered during the day.
4. The cost was reasonable.
5. I wanted to improve my employability.
6. I wanted a new career or trade.
7. I wanted to be able to be the sole supporter of my family if the need should arise.
8. The program teaches you more about the job you want and you apply your training instead of spending time doing just book studies.
9. I wanted to use my GI benefits.
10. I needed to brush-up on my current skills and learn new ones for my career field.
11. The program has a good reputation and is well recommended.
12. I can stop and start the course again if I should need to.
13. I wanted to be able to do my present job better.
14. I wanted to start my own business.
15. I wanted to improve myself and broaden my horizons.
16. I wanted to learn a new skill and prepare a better future for myself.
17. I needed something constructive to do now that I am retired.
18. I needed to find a stable job.
19. I wanted to advance in my present job.
20. I wanted to increase my knowledge and skill beyond what I learned in high school.
21. I needed training for certification in my field.
22. I wanted to be able to earn more money.
23. I wanted more, better job opportunities.
24. I wanted to further my education for less cost than through a college.
25. The course could be completed faster than those offered elsewhere.
26. The courses are occupation-oriented.
27. I needed a challenge as therapy for the loss of my spouse.
28. I needed technical information in the field.
30. I wanted to make a career change for more meaningful employment.
31. I was looking for a self-paced program that provided teacher assistance when needed.
32. I wanted a high school diploma.
33. I needed a training program with hours compatible with child's school hours.
34. I wanted to help contribute to family's income.
35. I needed experience and confidence before going out to work.
36. I wanted to change my way of life from being just a homemaker.
37. I wanted to be skilled in more than one area.
38. I entered only because my counselor pushed me to attend.
39. I needed financial security.
40. I wanted to make income to continue my education.

41. I needed training quickly as I am soon moving.
42. The positive attitude of the faculty was a major reason for my enrollment.
43. I was injured and needed to learn a new trade.
44. I need to learn enough to get a job.
45. I wanted training in a field I enjoy and to get a job I will be happy with.
46. I desired to learn from qualified people in order to compete in a technical society.
47. I needed hands-on experience.
48. I needed to upgrade previous knowledge.
49. I wanted standards of training in an environment appropriate to my career choice.
50. I want a trade that cannot be learned quickly so that my job opportunities are good.
51. I wanted a variety of choices in terms of classes.
52. I wanted to get a good job without putting in four years of school.
53. The schedule allowed me to attend school and work full-time.
54. I wanted well-trained teachers and comfortable classrooms.
55. The school helps you find a job.
56. I needed a profession in which I would be self-reliant.
57. I wanted to go back to my country with better knowledge.

Question 22: Other major reasons for continuing in vocational training.

1. The teachers are interested in helping each student become successful.
2. I am impressed with the type of training.
3. I have enrolled in a second course.
4. I want to graduate and start my career.
5. With the training, you have more job opportunities and a greater chance of acceptance.
6. I will have the qualifications to get a better job.
7. I will have a better job and future.
8. I want to improve my skills.
9. Cooperation with fellow students has been A-1.
10. When I complete the course I will have a positive and constructive direction for my retirement.
11. I need to keep myself occupied.
12. I would like to get a job in the field I am training in.
13. I hope to advance in my present job.
14. The training I am getting is excellent.
15. I want to continue on in college.
16. I like being able to choose my own pace.
17. I have a lot of time invested.
18. I learn and get paid at the same time.
19. I want to continue until I find the area that I can be most successful in.
20. I want to reach my goal that I have set.

21. I will continue so I can draw all my VA benefits.
22. I am enjoying it.
23. I want to increase my overall knowledge.
24. It is challenging and interesting. The instructors are excellent and encourage the students.
25. I want to get a certificate.
26. The diploma will help you get a job.
27. I found that the training was complete and interesting.
28. I want to gain more knowledge of the total scope and future of my area.
29. The training will be very helpful in job placement and continuing school.
30. I want to get a license to practice.
31. It gives me a feeling of accomplishment.
32. I have decided to make this my career.
33. I want to know the latest techniques.
34. I believe I am getting practical, job related experience but I am not good enough to work yet.
35. I need more experience.
36. I appreciate the qualified teachers who take time to work with you.
37. I believe I will be able to earn more money when I have completed this.
38. Students can learn and acquire good work habits.
39. The benefits from completing the program outweigh the negative aspects.
40. I am assured of a good career when I finish.
41. I will have more job security.
42. I will be able to better compete in the labor market if I have these skills.
43. I will have a skill that is needed in my country.
44. I will have a better standard of living.